



2.1 THEORY OF CHANGE: HOW TO (STAGE 1)

HOW to develop a THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC) model for a program

There are many ways of developing a TOC model for a program. Here we present a set of steps to help you build your model that start with story. This technique has been shown to be effective in engaging program team members and other stakeholders in TOC development from the very beginning. It is also helpful to keep in mind that the first stages of building a TOC are about 'progress' and not 'perfection'. Viewing the model as 'a work in progress', can be helpful.

1 USE STORY TO FIND WHY activity to elicit specific program stories about specific people and specific moments (See Information Sheet: TOC-Build your model 1.3. Modelling: Finding the why) and mental models (of how you and your team think the program works) to brainstorm program **activities** (What you do) and program **results** (The difference you make).

TIP:

Visual Insights uses colour coding to help clearly separate program 'activities' (green) from program 'results or outcomes' (blue).

ACTIVITIES

RESULTS OR OUTCOMES

Separating these two major features at the beginning will help you build an effective TOC. The body of the TOC will be mostly blue (outcomes focused). The model will have a narrow area of green on the left-hand side (major activities).

2 LIST OUT ALL THE VERBS that represent program activities. Considering stories and your program, note the specific contribution the program made (or will make) to the lives of others. The more you can list out at this stage the easier your tasks will be for later steps.

3 LIST OUT ALL THE RESULTS of these program activities. In other words ask, "How were people's lives different after they interacted with the program?" What were these individuals able to do or become as a result of the program. Write each of these results or outcomes in a box using just a few words for each.

Below is an example of listing out all the verbs (activities) and results (difference made).

THE VERBS

Listened	Collaborated	Trained
Educated	Supported men and families	Promoted
Provided Information	Introduced	

THE RESULTS

increased happiness	improved family relationships	increased mates
increased social connection	decreased loneliness	
more confidence		

4 IDENTIFY THE MAIN GOAL OF THE PROGRAM (ultimate outcome). Articulate the long-term outcome in a few words. Place this on the right-hand side of your model. Consider whether this ultimate or long-term outcome you have chosen is feasible within the time and scope of the program. Consider the goals of key stakeholders, and if different from the goal you have identified, place them somewhere in far right-hand side of the model for later consideration.

6 PLACE THE ELEMENTS ONTO THE TOC MODEL.
Move the named and grouped activities to the left-hand side of your model in a column. Place the ultimate outcome to the far right-hand side of the model. Move the results or outcomes to the middle of the model.

5 GROUP THE VERBS.
Using the listed verbs or activities, move them into groups of similar activities.
Aim for no more than 5 or 6 activity groupings. Then name each group of activities using a short 3 - 6 word name. For each group of activities (or major activity) note who the target group(s) is. An example is shown below.

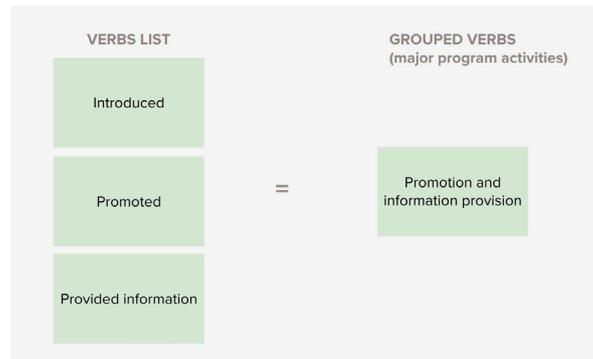
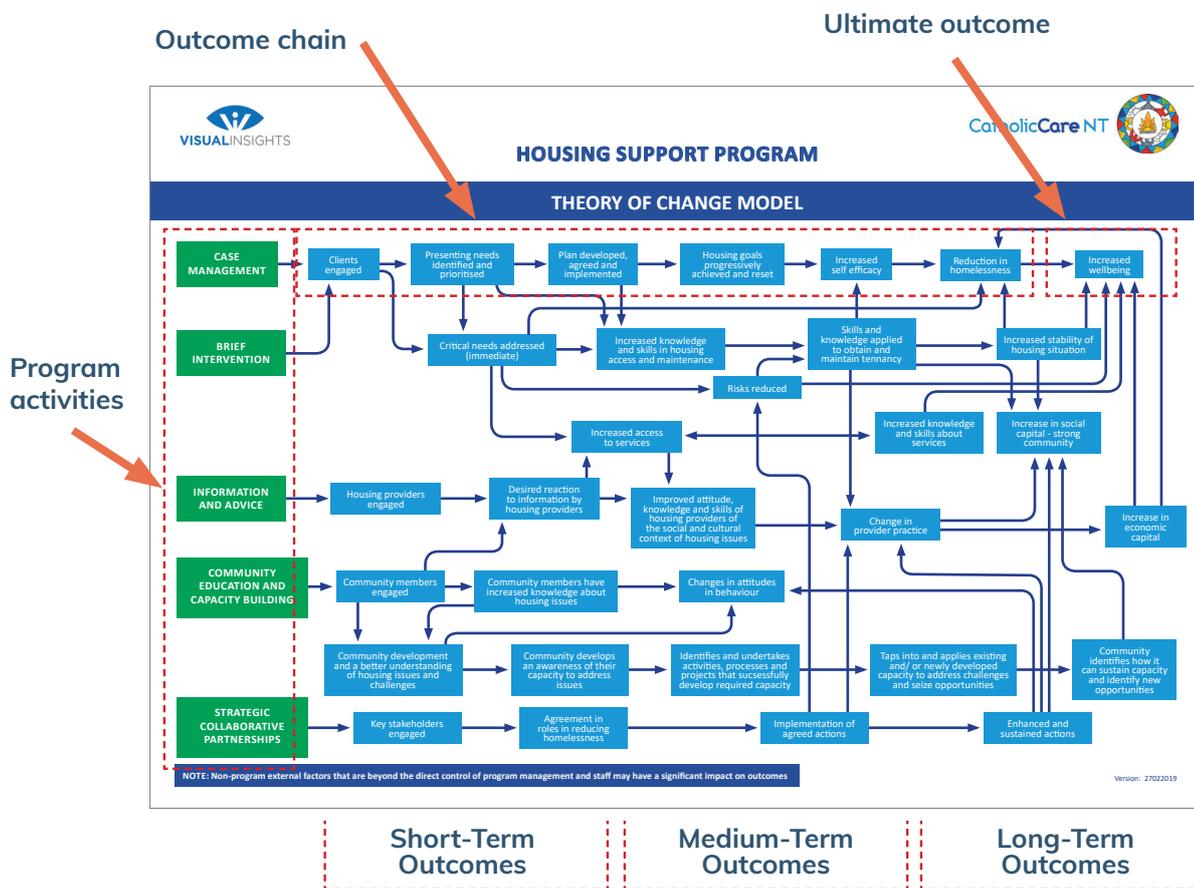


DIAGRAM: Theory of Change

The below image shows the main elements of a Theory of Change.



7 BUILD OUTCOME CHAINS FROM EACH MAJOR ACTIVITY TO THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME.

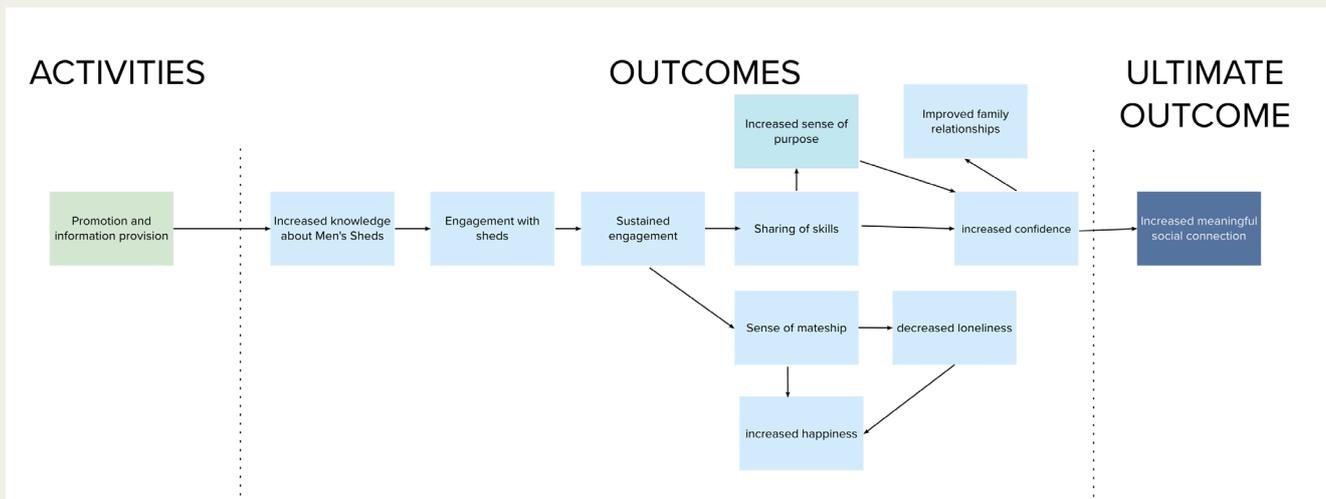
Build outcome chains from each major activity to the ultimate outcome. Starting with one major activity on the left-hand side of the model, use story or your mental model (how you think the changes happen over time in a sequence) to create a results chain that links the major activity to the long-term or ultimate outcome. (See BOX – Outcomes chains).

8 ADD SOME ADDITIONAL LINKS TO JOIN THE OUTCOMES CHAINS TO EACH OTHER.

Add some additional links to join the outcomes chains to each other. You will note that as you build the model, that the outcomes that are part of each outcome chain are related to outcomes of other chains. This will happen more on the right-hand side of the model. Add a limited number of arrows linking each of these chains at this stage. Be conservative with arrows to keep the model simple. As you continue to build your TOC model, you will be able to incorporate complexity through more links.

OUTCOMES CHAINS

Outcomes chains or results chains are the major building blocks of TOC models. Each outcomes chain should focus on changes in a specific target group, so it is helpful to have the target group in mind as you develop each outcomes chain. Outcomes chains start at the left-hand side of the TOC model at one of the major program activities and end at the right-hand side of the model at the ultimate outcome.



There are no rules as to how many outcomes or links make up each outcome chain. However, to ensure the TOC retains good communicability, it is recommended that each outcome chain is made up of no more than 5 or 6 links.

Outcomes chains are a series of if-then statements. If this happens then that happens. Each of these statements is an assumption that we make based on story and our mental models. At this early stage of building your TOC do not worry too much about testing each of these assumptions. This will happen later as we use a deductive approach and the research literature to test and provide evidence for each of these outcome links.

You can see the outcomes chain highlighted in “Diagram: Theory of Change” as a typical feature of the TOC model.

WARNING

Outcomes chains, as their name suggests, consist only of outcomes or results. They should always describe a change in the target group. It is important to distinguish between these and flow diagrams or diagrams of program processes.